Sadistic activities, which may express dominance or inflict pain and/or humiliation on the other person, include restraint, blindfolding, whipping, burning, rape, stabbing, strangulation, and even death. Masochists may seek to be the object of some of these acts as well as other types of humiliation, including forced cross-dressing. A particularly dangerous and fatal masochistic practice is hypoxophilia, which consists of deliberately cutting off one’s oxygen supply through mechanical or chemical means. Both sadistic and masochistic fantasies usually begin in childhood, and the disorders usually manifest in early adulthood. When associated with antisocial personality disorder, it may result in serious injury to others or death.

**Voyeurism**

Voyeurism is a paraphilia in which a person finds sexual excitement in watching unsuspecting people who are nude, undressing, or having sex. Voyeurs are almost always male, and the victims are usually strangers. A voyeur may fantasize about having sex with the victim but almost never actually pursues this. The voyeur may return to watch the same stranger repeatedly, but there is rarely physical contact.

Voyeurs are popularly known as “peeping Toms,” based on the eleventh-century legend of Lady Godiva. According to the story, Tom was a tailor who “peeped” at Lady Godiva as she rode naked through the streets of Coventry, England, in a sacrificial act to get her husband to lower taxes. Tom was struck with blindness for not looking away like everyone else did.

**Incidence and treatment**

Psychologists estimate that a greater percentage of people experience sexual deviance than is officially reported. This is because many people who carry out sexual deviations do not consider their activities to be deviant. For instance, sadomasochists have group meetings, workshops, and large gatherings and have become something of a subculture. They do not typically think of themselves as needing therapy or treatment.

People who seek treatment for paraphilias often do so because they have been cited for illegal activity or because they are afraid they may do something illegal and be caught for it. Many different treatments have been tried with paraphilias, from medication to group therapy, to eliminate the behavior. Psychologists report low success rates, especially among criminally charged child molesters. Behavior modification is most likely to succeed when a combination of therapy, aversion technique (using electric shock or visualization to change pleasure experience), and medication is employed.

*See also Pedophilia*

**Further Reading**


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**Parapsychology**

Meaning “beside psychology,” term used to describe the study of paranormal, or psi, phenomena, the most significant being extra-sensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK).

The study of paranormal activities and phenomena has been riddled with controversy since its conception. It is claimed that some people, utilizing senses beyond the ordinary, exhibit powers that cannot be explained by traditional science. Skeptics of the paranormal point to the fact that in over a century since the first serious studies of the paranormal began, usually dated to the opening of the Society for Psychical Research in London in 1882, no replicable demonstration of any such powers has ever been conducted. Yet many people continue to believe in the existence of the paranormal.

The most studied and debated paranormal phenomena are ESP and psychokinesis. ESP is an acronym for extra-sensory perception and encompasses clairvoyance, the ability to perceive something without the use of the senses, and telepathy, the ability to communicate with another person without the use of the senses. (Parapsychologists currently refer to telepathy as “anomalous processes of information or energy transfer.”)

Clairvoyance was the first paranormal phenomena to be seriously considered by scientists, probably because devising tests to prove or disprove its existence was easy. In the late 1920s, many such tests were devised by J.B. Rhine, a psychology professor who had left Harvard University to help found the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University. Rhine’s tests often produced positive results for clairvoyance, and at the time his work was seriously regarded. In recent decades, however, much of Rhine’s work has been discredited as being biased, careless, and, in some cases, utterly fraudulent.
Recent studies have proven more reputable but far from conclusive. One such study revealed statistically significant telepathic abilities among 100 men and 140 women tested in Scotland over six years in the mid-1980s. In the tests, “senders” focused on images or video clips and attempted to send those impressions to a “receiver” in a sensory-isolated room. The researchers reported that one in three sessions led to a “hit,” meaning that the receiver reported visualizing images similar to those being sent. A hit is expected to occur by chance in one in four instances. On the other hand, the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States discounted the existence of ESP after conducting its own experiments in “remote viewing.” The agency concluded that there were not enough evidence for its existence.

Psychokinesis (PK) is the ability to manipulate physical objects with the mind. Probably the most infamous purveyor of psychokinetic powers was the Israeli psychic and entertainer Uri Geller, who became an international celebrity by bending spoons, supposedly with his mind. During his career, he would never demonstrate his spoon bending ability in a controlled environment, and he was on several occasions shown to be faking. Another form of PK is known as spontaneous PK, in which a physical action occurs in response to psychological trauma. There are personal accounts, for instance, of clocks and watches stopping at the moment of a loved one’s death. J.B. Rhine was one of the first to conduct experiments in PK, primarily with the use of dice. He tested a subject’s ability to influence the outcome of a toss and found that many people demonstrated a slight ability, beyond chance, of “controlling” the dice.

There are other phenomena studies by parapsychologists, including hauntings, UFOs, near-death and after-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, psychic healing, and many others. All of these share the curious nature of ESP and PK in that, anecdotally speaking, occurrences are widespread, believed by members of many cultures, and discussed throughout history. Yet none have been scientifically demonstrated or reproduced. Despite the lack of proof, many people firmly believe in the paranormal, as evidenced by personal testimony, the popularity of television shows such as “The X-Files,” and by the huge profits generated by psychic phone lines and other occult enterprises. One of the reasons the scientific community is skeptical about paranormal phenomena is that there is no apparent basis in physical laws for such phenomena. In every other scientific discipline, it is possible to speculate reasonably that events occur as they do because they follow a recognized natural law, such as gravity or conservation of energy. Parapsychologists have failed to develop adequate theoretical reasons for the existence of the phenomena they purport to demonstrate. Nevertheless, it seems that most people are open to the possibility of the paranormal despite the lack of evidence.

**Further Reading**

**Parent-child relationships**

The relationship, over the full extent of a child’s development, between parent and child.

Of the many different relationships we form over the course of the life span, the relationship between parent and child is among the most important. Not surprisingly, students of child development have devoted considerable attention to the parent-child relationship, in order to understand how it develops and functions over the lifespan. Among the many questions researchers examine are those concerning normative changes in the parent-child relationship over the course of development (e.g., How does the parent-child relationship change during adolescence?), the impact of variations in the parent-child relationship on the child’s behavior and functioning (e.g., Which types of discipline are most effective during the preschool years?), and the effects of the parent-child relationship on the parent (e.g., How are adults affected by parenthood?).

**Infancy**

A baby cries, a parent feeds her; a baby snuggles, a parent hugs her. Day after day, night after night, mothers and fathers feed, burp, wash, change, dress, and hold their babies. Out of these interactions, feelings and expectations grow. The baby feels distressed and hungry, then satisfied; the parent feels tenderness, joy, annoyance, exhaustion, pleasure. Gradually, the baby begins to expect that her parent will care for her when she cries. Gradually, parents respond to and even anticipate their baby’s needs. These elements form the basis for a developing relationship, a combination of behaviors, interactions, feelings, and expectations that are unique to a particular parent and a particular child.